

## CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

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*“Staggered by an enormous deficit, horrific losses of natural resources and human life, the Forest Service must make a valiant effort to strengthen its resolve and address the issue of fire.”*

Missoulian newspaper article, 1911

*“Like the issue of slavery, the United States must resolve this issue of fire. We can no longer avoid the fact, we must deal with it, and now.”*

Gifford Pinchot—Chief of US Forest Service, 1911

*From the July 12, 2000 ‘An Agency Strategy for Fire Management, A Report from the National Management Review Team, USDA Forest Service’:*

- 1. The Forest Service fire and fuels program is not well integrated with the land management program of the agency.*
- 2. In some instances, line and staff officer relationships regarding fire management are ineffective.*
- 3. The Forest Service’s ability to provide adequate support to large fires is diminishing.*
- 4. Many cooperators and partners think the Forest Service is ineffective and inefficient in fire management.*
- 5. The agency should adopt and implement the Large Incident Management Organization (NIMO) to more effectively, efficiently, and successfully posture itself in the future.*

*These five problems are chronic. They have been identified over and over in many reviews in this decade. The four problems need immediate resolution. It is time for a change.*

### I Purpose and Need for This Study

In 1999, the Chief of the Forest Service commissioned an initial review team to examine several issues concerning the agency's fire management program. The report from this effort *An Agency Strategy for Fire Management* is known informally as "*The Jacob's Report*."

In January 2003, The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) charted the interagency National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) Management Options Team to:

- Review *An Agency Strategy for Fire Management* report.
- Evaluate alternative implementation strategies for the National Incident Management Organization referred to in this report.
- Develop recommendations and evaluate the ramifications, impacts, feasibility, costs and effectiveness of implementing the report's actions.
- Develop specific implementation options available to the interagency fire community.
- Ensure that these recommendations and implementation options meet overall agency resource goals and objectives, the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, and the National Fire Plan.

The ability of state and federal wildland fire agencies to meet both natural, cultural resource and fire program management objectives and to provide adequate emergency complex incident management is becoming increasingly difficult. The same skilled people who are needed to manage incidents already have critical full time jobs on their home units. During an increasing period of the year these competing interests are creating increased tension for employees and supervisors for selecting jobs which will not be accomplished. This study looks at organizational options to meet incident management needs while reducing the impact to state and federal natural resource employees. A key objective of this study is to analyze organizational options which allow the natural, cultural and fire resource management work of the local unit to proceed year-round while meeting the growing complex incident management demands.

Given the condition of the forests and rangelands, we can expect the incidence and severity of "Mega Fires" to increase until major accomplishments occur in landscape fuels management. To meet the needs of complex incident management in these situations a change in the protocols and procedures is needed for the management of Interagency Incident Management Teams.

Homeland Security Presidential Directive -8 States, "The head of each Federal department or agency shall undertake actions to support the national preparedness goal, including adoption of quantifiable performance measurements in the areas of training, planning, equipment, and exercises for Federal incident management and asset preparedness, to the extent permitted by law. Specialized Federal assets such as **teams, stockpiles, and caches shall be maintained at levels consistent with the national**

**preparedness goal and be available for response activities as set forth in the National Response Plan”...**

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## **II Project Objectives**

1. Develop and evaluate organizational options to:
  - Meet natural, cultural and resource management objectives on the local unit.
  - Meet the needs for complex wildland incident management including non-fire incidents.
  - Improve interagency cooperation in initial and extended attack and complex incident management.
2. Based on the evaluation of organizational options, develop a preferred strategic recommendation.
3. Improve quality and effectiveness fire management programs on the local unit.

### **Characteristics Common to All Organizational Options**

All of the organizational management options (except for Option 1) displayed in this report:

- Assume that a sustainable number of Type I, Type II and Area Command teams will be available for use for both wildfire and non-wildfire emergency use throughout the calendar year.
- Work within the confines of an increasing—but not preeminent role—non-wildfire emergency scenario. (The federal wildland fire management agencies' role is, when needed, to support these incidents while they continue to focus on their traditional resource management missions. Their role also includes teaching and instructing others in incident management.)
- Assume:
  - Commitment of additional resources (people and funding) to the complex incident management arena.
  - A significantly enhanced priority for complex incident management in the natural resource management agencies through new policies.
- Focus on change.
- Will require enhanced contracting emphasis such as;

- Add Contracting Officer skills to support incident contract needs and the contract infrastructure.
- All contracts will be “best values” and “indefinite quantity” contracts.
- The ability to improve the accountability for complex incident management and other related tasks.

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### III Background

**The following prior reports all emphasized the need to improve the complex wildland fire management organization system:**

- *The USDA Forest Service An Agency Strategy for Fire Management: A Report from the National Management Review Team (Jacobs's Report).*
- *Policy Implications of Large Fire Management: A Strategic Assessment of Factors Influencing Costs – A report by the Strategic Overview of Large Fire Costs Team (Rains Report).*
- *Interagency Management Review Team, South Canyon Fire, Federal Wildland Fire Policy I and 2.*
- *The Federal Wildland Fire Policy I and II*
- *Additional Actions Required to Better Identify and Prioritize Lands Needing Fuel Reduction – GAO-03-805*
- *Wildfire Suppression: Strategies for Containing Costs, National Academy of Public Administration, "...fire programs could benefit from developing additional locally committed Type 3 organizations consisting of federal and local firefighters who are not committed to serving on Type 1 or 2 teams"*
- *Failure to successfully manage the Incident Management Program will add further evidence to those who say the Resource Management Agencies are no longer capable of managing the Wildland Fire Program.*

#### A. Supply and Demand

##### **Demand for IMTs is increasing as Their Availability Decreases**

Suppression costs add up to hundreds of millions of dollars each year for the complex incidents assigned to interagency wildland fire Incident Management Teams. In years 2000 through 2003 suppression costs exceeded a billion dollars annually.

In support of the National Response Plan (NRP) (under the Department of Homeland Security), current Incident Management Teams are becoming more involved with non-traditional management activity. With increasing exposure, and increasing flammability of the public lands, the public and incident management personnel's safety risks are increasing each year because of natural fuel loading.

Ironically, the need and use of Incident Management Teams is growing while the available number of these teams is decreasing. The maximum use of teams in the past 25 years occurred in 2000 when all available Type 1 and Type 2 Interagency Incident Management Teams, Area Command Teams, most Fire Use Management Teams (FUMT), most state incident management teams, and three Canadian Incident Management Teams, were all committed.

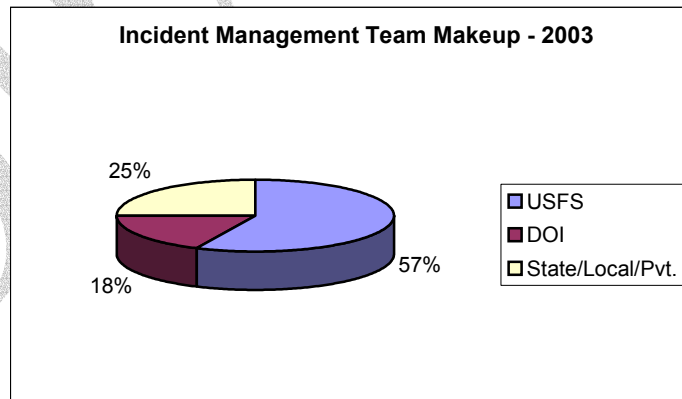
All Type 1 Incident Management Teams have been simultaneously committed 10 out of the past 25 years. During this same period, all Interagency Type 2 Incident Management Teams have been simultaneously committed three different times. In four or more out of the past ten years all IMTs have been committed one time with outstanding resources

Numerous agency reports have pointed out the need for a more aggressive fuels program to improve overall forest health. Targets in fuels and vegetation management have increased significantly since 2000. Fuels management is the larger strategic objective and more attention must be focused on these vegetative management programs. The people who form, plan and accomplish these programs are the same people who are the incident managers who are frequently are on complex incidents. They cannot do both jobs.

### **Incident Management Team and Area Command Composition**

In 2003, National Interagency Incident Management Teams were comprised of:

- 57% U.S. Forest Service.
- 18% U.S. Department of the Interior.
- 25% state, local government and private wildland fire services.



National Area Command Teams:

- 72% U.S. Forest Service.
- 22% U.S. Department of the Interior.
- 6% state.

Because of backfilling, pay structure, and union agreements, the costs of Incident Management Teams often increase as the local government participation increases.

### **Incident Management Team Attrition**

The existing workforce and the skills mix of that workforce are insufficient to address changing fire management priorities and increased fire management complexities. Demographic trends such as an aging workforce, two-career families, changing career interests, and other factors have significantly reduced the numbers of personnel available for fire management activities, especially fire suppression and fuels management. These changes have brought the agencies to a critical decision point. If action is not taken now, the current Incident Management Team system will cease to exist simply from the shortage of qualified personnel in the agencies to staff the teams. The specific metrics of these trends are as follows:

Personnel retirements within the federal and state wildland fire agencies are projected to be far above average over the next five years.

During the past 15 years, the number of interagency Type 2 Incident Management Teams and state Incident Management Teams has dropped by almost 50%. If this trend continues, national Type 1 Incident Management Teams will have an increase in workload far beyond the capabilities of the current 16 established teams.

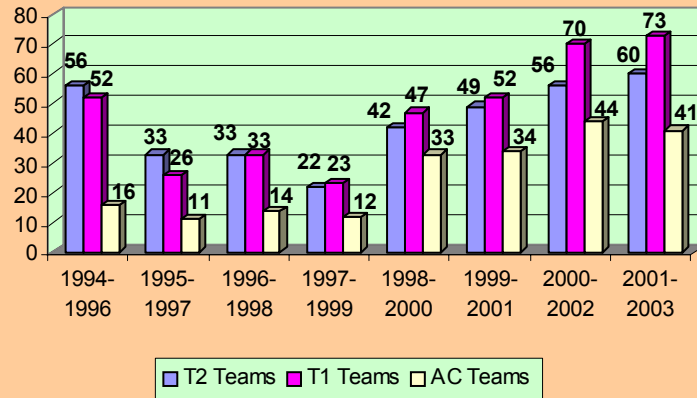
There are currently:

- 16 Interagency Type 1 Incident Management Teams
- 35 Interagency Type 2 Incident Management Teams
- 22 State Incident Management Teams
- 4 Fire Use Management Teams
- 4 Interagency Area Command Teams

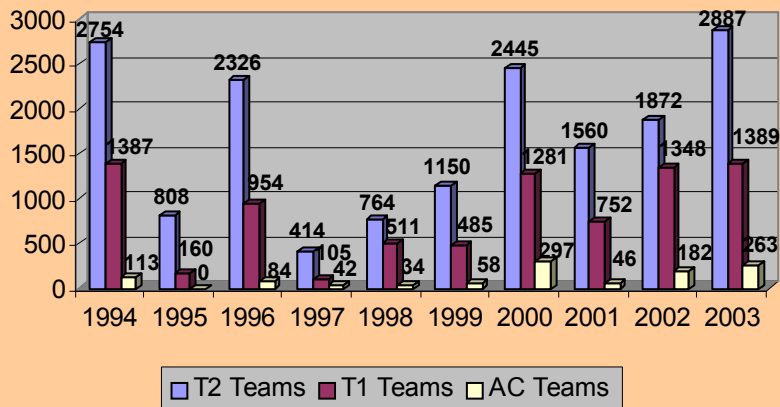
From 1994 through 2003, Interagency Incident Management Teams averaged 4 assignments per year. Area Command Teams averaged 1.4 assignments per year



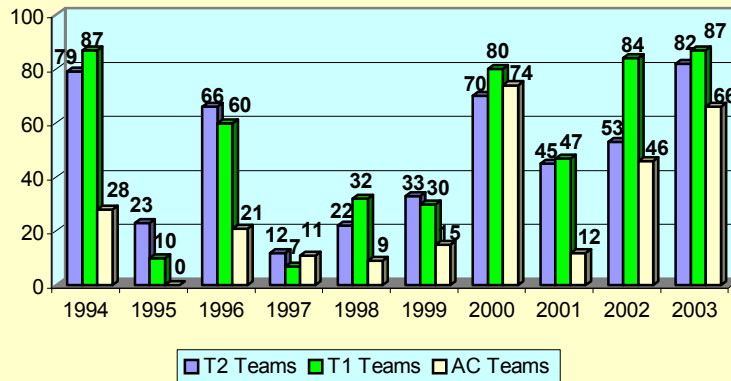
**Three Year Rolling Average Number of Days out 1994-2003**



**Actual Days Out - All Assignments 1994-2003**



**Average Days out per Team 1994-2003**



Furthermore, local and state government involvement on Incident Management Teams is currently growing while federal participation is decreasing within these interagency organizations.

Collateral duties for complex incident management compete with local duties and objectives. Employees are often needed at the same time for:

- Complex incident management assignments.
- Home unit land, natural and cultural resource management.
- Fire program management on the local unit.

Additionally, Homeland Security, through the National Response Plan, and other requests for non-wildland fire assignments have made an increasing impact on the complex incident management organizations. During the past 10 years IMT's and Area Command have averaged 9 non-wildland fire assignments per year. In 2003 there were 32 assignments.

### **Positions Needed to Fill Teams**

The issue of team size is complex. The lack of qualified personnel at the local geographic and national level has caused the teams to either wait for the system to locate these individuals or add these positions to the teams to be fully operational on arrival at the Incident.

In recent years a tremendous increase in expectations, both internal and external has occurred. These expectations have added required positions with specialties to meet these needs.

The current combined total of 51 Interagency Type 1 Incident Management Teams, Interagency Type 2 Incident Management Teams, and Area Command Teams carry approximately 3076 positions on their standing teams (approximately 60 personnel per team).

If all the Type I and Type II Interagency IMT's were assigned at the same time—based on past usage—they would need approximately an additional 3,060 miscellaneous management or supervisory positions filled.

The 16 Interagency Type 1 Incident Management Teams and the Type 2 Incident Management Teams fill an average of 60 miscellaneous management, supervisory or support positions.

Both Interagency Type 1 and Type 2 Incident Management Teams now average one primary and one alternate Command and General Staff position filled with administratively determined (AD) hires.

- Short term solutions to personnel shortages include the effective use of highly qualified retirees though the use of the rehired annuitants. Individual agency

interpretation for fire emergencies must be changed to reflect the flexibility in the law in a common way to utilize this authority to fill shortage positions, mentor personnel and provide training.

- The complication and individual agency interpretation of the ability to use contracting instruments for hiring qualified incident management personnel precludes the ability to utilize this significant pool of trained resources. This issue could be partially mitigated with an emergency pay rate system that is consistent, equitable and fair.
- **Development of a Federal Wildland Reserve Program concept by:**
  - Utilizing trained and qualified personnel that are no longer in the federal, state or local service that are willing to commit to availability for a prescribed period of time per year to meet emergency response position shortages. This model would be similar to the military reserve program.
  - **Key elements include:**
    - These IMT Reservists would commit for a period of three years and would be paid through the rehired annuitant authority and the AD program for state and local government during actual incident assignments and training.
    - Currency would include a commitment to refresher training and physical fitness testing as appropriate prior to issuance of qualification card. This refresher would include agency's policy changes, new procedures and new technology.
    - Utilize IQCS and ROSS to develop and maintain daily available lists for incident response and training course execution.
    - This reserve program would be available to respond regardless of preparedness level for any emergency if normal agency resources are not available. This program could also be utilized on long duration incidents to free up agency personnel to accomplish their workload at the home unit.

This concept is in concert with the roles and responsibilities outlined in "*Homeland Security Presidential Directive HSPD-7 and 8*."

### **Long Term Solutions through Training and Development:**

The Agencies are experiencing a major shortage of qualified personnel to meet Incident Management requirements. This is due to a period of agency flat budgets, very few new hires, conflicting work activities and in some cases reductions in force. This period of

time was in excess of 15 years followed by an increase in new hires as a result of the National Fire Plan. The consequence is a gap between recent hire qualifications and a continuous high rate of retirements over the next few years. The diminishing qualified training cadre, lack of available instructors, and available students to attend courses has caused course cancellations in many areas.

The additional Forest Service training requirements and unique task book protocols greatly slows the qualification progression for FS employees. This is contributing to the current erosion of forest service participation on IMT's and will increase as current highly qualified FS personnel retire.

**The current training system is failing and will continue to fail to meet the needs for qualified incident management personnel.**

To solve this problem the following must occur:

- Standard training requirements by all agencies must be at the forefront.
- Amend the current training program to reduce redundancy.
- Repackage the training delivery system to increase the pace to meet training requirements.
- Utilize a mentoring process to facilitate trainee completion
- Identify individuals for accelerated training and provide support and commitment to ensure this investment in training is realized.
- Agencies must commit to make students and instructors available.

Advances in technology require specialist to operate and utilize these advances that may increase firefighter safety and efficiency at the incident.

Increase reliance on contract resources has added contract specialists and is compounded by the multiple contracts requiring a person with warrants to manage these different contracts.

Within the last 5 years the incidence of the "Mega Fire" has increased to the magnitude of multiple per year. These incidents are of extremely high complexity requiring a strong reliance on overhead personnel to accomplish the tactical and support mission.

The mentoring and development of future Incident Management Teams has added trainee positions.

As Department of Homeland Security's training and certification system evolves, equivalencies between the systems and course development will have to be accomplished to avoid duplication and confusion.

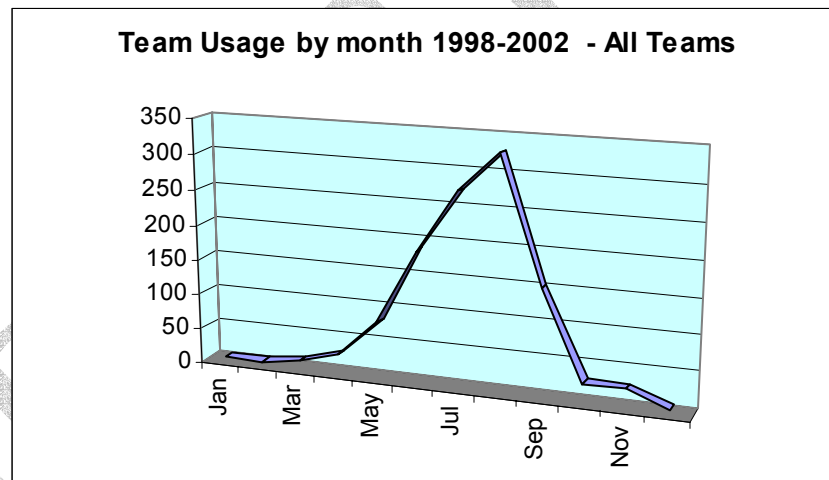
**Type 1 and Type 2 Incident Management Teams are decreasing in Number**

The number of Interagency Type 2 Incident Management Teams and State Incident Management Teams has decreased 50% during the past 16 years. National Type 1 Incident Management Teams have decreased 12% during this same period of time—due primarily to retirements and lack of available personnel. The trend for decreasing teams is expected to continue.

## Needs Analysis

The NIMO Task Group gathered information on Type I and II Interagency IMT's, Fire Management Use IMT's and Area Command use for the period from 1994 through 2003. The data was not included for the 22 state IMT's since their mission is to meet state responsibilities and not the needs of the federal or local government incident management. The National MAC Group requested that the NIMO Task Group develop the maximum amount of Type I and II Interagency IMT and Area Command days use per year per team. We then adjusted the number of teams needed to meet the average number of days that teams are assigned from the needs analysis data..

The following chart shows team usage over the past five years



## Support of Wildland Fire Assignments

Increasing time commitments have caused supervisors to not support their employees' involvement with wildland fire incidents and fire training and non-wildland fire assignments off units. The competition for individuals' time to accomplish both natural and cultural resource management and local fire and aviation management duties and complex incident management assignments has created this perception of non support. This perception of non-support stems from the competition for an individual's time to accomplish:

- Land and natural and cultural resource management duties.
- Local fire program management duties.

- Complex incident management assignments.

Unless this issue is resolved, the future availability of employees will decrease as non-wildland fire incident needs increase.

### **Incident Management Personnel Pressures**

The increasing concern about environmental quality, safety, and cost effectiveness is resulting in growing pressures to perform incident management. At the same time, due to the growing amount of ecosystems out of balance and the increasing public expectations for fire services in the wildland urban interface, the complexity of incidents is also increasing.

### **Turnover and Attrition**

Over the next five years, the National Interagency Type 1 Incident Management Teams, Interagency Type 2 Incident Management Teams, and Area Command Teams will turn over 92% of their Command and General Staffs (473 of 512 positions) due to retirements or inability, tenure or unwillingness to participate. Consequently the availability of qualified and experienced instructors to train future incident management team members will be lost from the agencies.

If the Command and General Staff, Advanced Incident Management and Area Command (S-420/520/620) classes are structured and scheduled as in the past, the demand for new qualified Command and General Staff will not be met. This shortfall will be even more severe because of state and local government incident management needs.

In addition, due to agency field unit reorganizations, fewer fire management leadership positions are staffed today. This results in less people being available for key positions on Incident Management Teams.

### **Factors that Contribute to the IMT Personnel Supply and Demand**

- There is no available model to identify complex wildland fire needs.
- The National Fire Plan has increased the number of fire-funded personnel. However, new employees are young and will not be qualified in command and general staff positions for another decade.
- The number of wildland fires managed by Fire Use Management Teams is increasing.

- Past reviews and reports have identified the need to strengthen initial and extended attack to reduce the use of Type 1 and 2 Incident Management Teams.
- Agency Administrators are requiring more fire management personnel to stay home because of increasing concerns about costs, safety, workload complexity, and accountability.
- Demographic trends such as an aging workforce, two-career families, changing career interests, and other factors have significantly reduced the numbers of personnel available for fire suppression activities.
- The general downsizing of federal agencies with fire management activities has led to fewer people to meet annual fire season staffing requirements.
- Cultural changes within the agencies and the employees that make up the current workforce. Today's workforce no longer has roots in a rural background, coming primarily from an urban setting where values do not coincide with the attributes associated with incident management (such as "camping out"). This is compounded by shifts in agency expectations of employees. For example, the expectation that all personnel will participate in fire or other emergency response no longer exists (while still in agency manuals, such as Forest Service Manual chapter 5100, it is no longer enforced).
- Due to the changing personal values and off-the-job impacts, many employees are now only available for local fire assignments.
- Agency culture has also changed in relationship to the importance of employee involvement with Incident Management Teams. An example of this phenomenon: the common standard of discouraging Agency Administrator participation on Incident Management Teams and not valuing the experience gained as a career enhancing assignment..
- Increased use of IMTs for DHS deployment and support during National Disasters
- Increased use of IMTs for non-fire activities i.e. Newcastle Disease, Space shuttle, etc.
- Decreasing number of people to be trained.

***By 2006 the Federal agencies will be unable to provide sufficient, viable volunteer militia unless options 2,3,4, or 5 are implemented. If***

***the policy changes proposed in these options are not adopted, only a Federal Wildland Fire Service will provide a satisfactory option for complex incident management.***

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### ***Where Have all the Firefighters Gone?***

*From the February 2001 'Where Have all the Firefighters Gone' by the Brookings Institution for the National Wildfire Coordinating Group:*

- *Availability and interest in fire assignments is driven by a number of factors, including workload priorities and loss of manpower.*
- *Fire is still respected and admired in the Forest Service, but most people don't have time to participate.*
- *Non-fire functions have created other niches. These local programs and projects take precedence over national concerns.*
- *Time for family and social life is important to personnel and there is no monetary incentive to work a fire.*
- *The focus on fuels management and working with others has led to a positive land stewardship approach.*

## **Background**

### **B. Standards and Oversight**

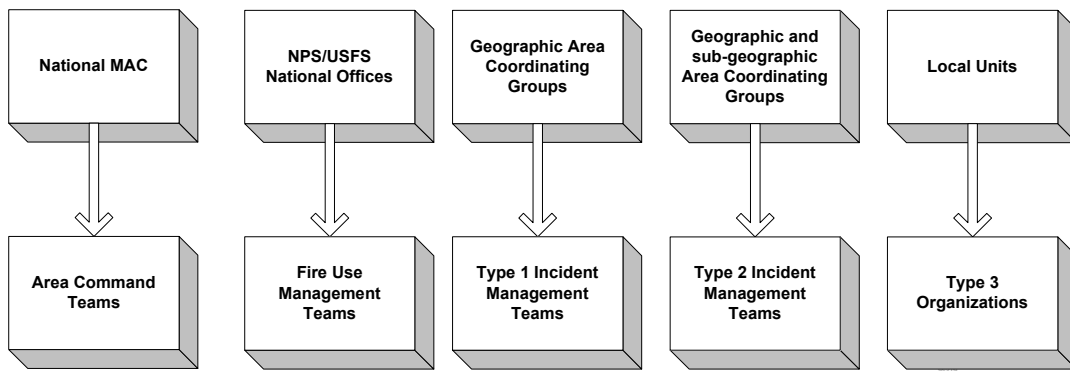
All oversight and most standards establishment are determined by:

- Geographic areas for Interagency Type 1 Incident Management Teams.
- Geographic or sub-geographic areas for Type 2 Interagency Incident Management Teams.
- The National Multi-Agency Coordination Group for Area Command Teams.

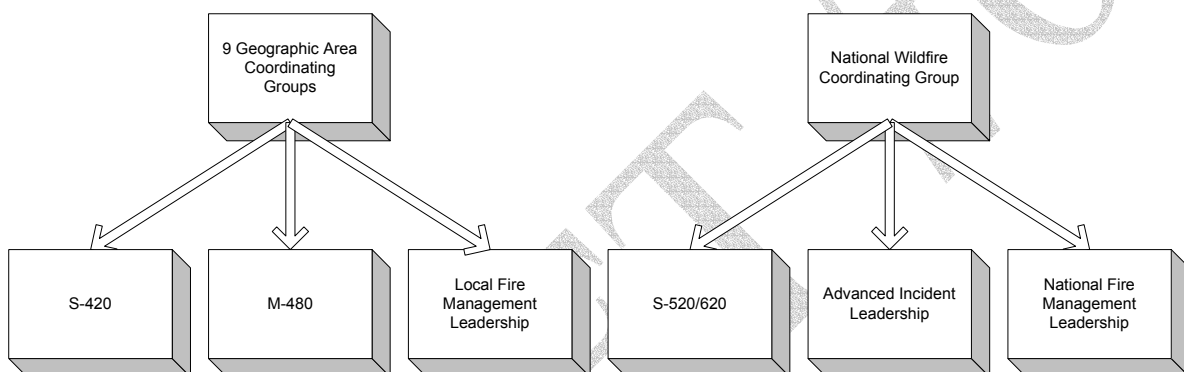
### **No Common Linkage**

The entire support and oversight system for Interagency Type 1 and Type 2 Incident Management Teams, Area Command Teams, and the S-420, S-520, and S-620 training programs have no common link.

A significant amount of time and effort is spent by the agency's employees to reconcile these issues. Even so, these classes and teams all depend on common standards and the availability of people to be successful in meeting agency and public objectives of complex incident management. Incident Management Team oversight:



### Training Oversight:



*No agency has accepted the authority or responsibility to require their agency—or geographic areas—to provide the needed number of personnel assigned to the incident management organizations.*

### National Fire Plan

### Standards Vary Between Geographic Areas

The use of ADs in Command and General Staff positions and the number of Operations Section Chiefs allowed on a team are examples of standards that vary between geographic areas. The geographic areas each defend their standards as being correct because they believe they are more cost efficient and safe.

### Team Size and Makeup: A Continuing Issue

Team size and makeup is a continuing issue between the agencies and Incident Commanders. Incident Commanders do not have confidence in personnel availability to fill miscellaneous supervisory, management and support positions. Therefore, they expand their standing teams to meet all perceived needs for these miscellaneous positions.

### **No IMT Standards**

Oftentimes, host Geographic Coordination Groups do not recognize out-of-geographic-area Incident Management Team standards, or team standards direction given by the National MAC Group.

For all levels of government to respond to both wildland fire and non-wildland fire incidents, the legal authorities and processes must be improved and made uniform, especially in light of *Homeland Security Presidential Directive number 5*.

### **Failure to Evaluate National Needs, Accept Authority**

There is no group responsible to evaluate the national needs for all types of incident management organizations. Likewise, no agency has accepted the authority or responsibility to require their agency—or geographic areas—to provide the needed number of personnel assigned to the incident management organizations.

The Type 1 and 2 Interagency Incident Management Teams are truly in place to meet the interagency needs of all geographic areas, therefore, should be uniform in operating procedures and policies.

The following must be accomplished to successfully achieve the goals as outlined in the options.

- National MAC team oversight
- National management of rotation to stay consistent with the new **60 days commitment policy**.
- National coordination of the type 2 teams to management the **60 day commitment** for Type 2 teams and miscellaneous overhead.

### **Efficiency of Teams - Processes and Positions**

Incident business processes have remained relatively unchanged for the past 20 years. Millions of dollars are spent on uncoordinated agency specific, functionally independent applications and processes. The lack of standardization of incident base information management tools interferes with the ability of Incident Management Teams to reliably utilize and share the same data and software everywhere as personnel or incidents transition and change. In addition, with the President's "e-gov" initiatives, there is incentive to provide tools that can be utilized by multiple agencies for post-incident activities (i.e. paying bills, processing time, upward reporting etc.).

The Incident Base Automation Strategic Planning Project (Incident Base Automation - Phase 2) will identify high level needs for changes to or elimination of current incident practices that may or may not be currently automated as well as the interconnectivity requirements between the various incident management functions. Implementation of the recommendations made from this project (due in 2005) will improve efficiency and may affect the number and kind of positions required on Incident Management teams.

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